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SUBJECT: BRAZIL: BOLIVIA ELECTION DEVELOPMENTS

REF: LA PAZ 3687

Classified By: Political Counselor Dennis Hearne. Reasons:1.4(B)(D).

1. (SBU) PolCouns spoke with senior Brazilian Government (GOB) contacts in the foreign ministry (MRE) and Presidency on 15 December to check on the GOB's preparations for the 18 December election in Bolivia. They noted the following:

2. (SBU) Marcel Biato, deputy foreign affairs advisor to President Lula da Silva, told PolCouns that Marco Aurelio Garcia, Lula's senior international advisor and designated Bolivia envoy, will travel on Saturday to Bolivia and link up with Carlos "Chaco" Alvarez, a former vice president of Argentina and Mercosul's senior political representative. Biato said Garcia and Alvarez, along with their advisors, will not act as observers per se, but rather will be in Bolivia as a "high-level presence" to show regional support for the democratic process. They plan to meet with the three presidential candidates and other key leaders, Biato said.

3. (SBU) The MRE's Acting Andean division chief, Lauro Beltrao, told PolCouns that Mercosul has also organized a regular election observer mission of working level personnel, including Brazilian officials, who should begin arriving in Bolivia on 16 December. He added the Mercosul mission was in part a response to the November "open letter" from the Bolivian Government seeking observers, and the details of the Mercosul mission had been finalized by FM Amorim in conversations with Bolivia's foreign minister.

4. (C) Comment. Biato and Beltrao both affirmed the GOB's paramount concern that the election process needs to be seen among Bolivians as transparent and legitimate. They said the GOB, like other observers, anticipates a best-case scenario in which there is a "gentleman's agreement" wherein the second-place candidate will defer to the front-runner if the margin of victory is clear. A more troubling scenario, in the GOB's view, would be a murky electoral result that leads to the president-elect being designated by the legislature, exacerbating the polarization among the populace. In an earlier meeting on 8 December during the Brasilia visit of WHA Special Advisor for Counter Terrorism and Border Security McCarthy, PolCouns ask Antonio Macedo Soares, a senior analyst in the Presidency's Institutional Security Cabinet (GSI), whether the GSI is planning for possible second-order effects if the Bolivia political situation deteriorates into instability or radicalization that threatens Brazilian interests, especially Petrobras and energy resources from Bolivia that are critical to industry in southern Brazil. (Note: The GSI is a combination crisis management and national security and intelligence coordination entity within the Brazilian presidency. End note.) Macedo Soares acknowledged that the GSI has been assessing likely impacts from energy shortfalls, but would not be drawn into a detailed discussion. Rather, he admitted candidly that the GOB is essentially banking on "a strategy of hope," i.e., that despite fiery nationalist rhetoric during the elections, sensible leaders in Bolivia will not allow radical new government policies or general instability to damage Brazilian energy industries which contribute so massively to Bolivia's economy. Per remarks of Brazil's Ambassador in La Paz noted in reftel, Macedo Soares also expressed deep concern within Brazil's police and intelligence communities about the potential for increased cocaine flows into Brazil from Bolivia in the event of a Morales victory.

CHICOLA